

Along with the 3 exercises I gave out last week, here are another 2 that will help prep you for the course and what we will be discussing. Again, these are not mandatory, but for those who do them they will be very effective at bringing the course alive.

Exercise #4

The meaning of the gospel is the proclamation of good news. It can be in verb form (“to proclaim good news”) or in noun form (“the proclamation of good news” or “the message of good news that is proclaimed”).

What is entailed and what impact does it make that the gospel is proclaimed? That the gospel is news? That the gospel is good?

Exercise # 5

In the book *Arise O God*, Andrew Stephen Damick writes, “This gospel spoke of the birth of a savior, whom providence had arranged to be filled with virtue for the benefit of all mankind. This savior, given to those who heard the gospel and their descendants, was bringing an end to all war. If it had not been for him, the whole world would have met its ruin. His benefactions were greater than those of all previous benefactors, and no one would ever surpass what he had done. The birth of this divine one was therefore the beginning of the good news (evangelia) for the whole world. His birthday would be celebrated as a fundamental change to the whole order of the cosmos. This proclamation was not, however, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The year was 9 BC, and this was the gospel of Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of the Roman Empire.”

Damick goes on to describe an inscription found in Priene, located in modern day Turkey, which declared “the gospel” began at Caesar Augustus’ birth and because of his greatness the people of Priene would shift their calendar so that the new year would coincide with Augustus’ birthday on September 23rd. The inscription declares Caesar’s greatness, how his subjects benefit under his reign, and thus even the calendar deserves to be centered around him. From this and other examples we know that “gospel” was a commonly used and understood concept before Christ.

Damick goes on to state, “A gospel in that time and place therefore was a proclamation of the one being proclaimed and what he had done. But there was always a third element to these evangelia—what was expected of those receiving the message.” In Caesar’s case it was allegiance to him.

Given the previous Exercises and this understanding of the definition and usage of the gospel, what does this indicate about Christ’s gospel?

For a brief introduction and picture of the inscription:

<https://webpages.scu.edu/ftp/cmurphy/courses/sctro27/artifacts/priene-calendar.htm>

For a translation of the inscription and fuller discussion:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170722070724/http://www.masseiana.org/priene.htm>

For another translation:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calendar_Inscription_of_Priene#cite_ref-9